United Nations A/55/942–S/2001/485

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
15 May 2001

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session
Agenda item 110
Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Security Council
Fifty-sixth year

Letter dated 14 May 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of resolution No. 216, adopted on 28 March 2001 by the Council of the League of Arab States at the Thirteenth Arab Summit, held at Amman on 27 and 28 March 2001 (see annex).

I should be grateful if this letter and its annex, The Arab Framework for the Rights of the Child, could be issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 110, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Zeid Ra'ad Z. **Al-Hussein**
Ambassador
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the United Nations

01-37423 (E) 310501 010601

Annex to the letter dated 14 May 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

Arab Framework on the Rights of the Child

The Council of the League of Arab States,

Meeting at summit level,

Having considered the Arab Framework on the Rights of the Child,

Decides:

1. *To endorse* the Arab Framework on the Rights of the Child and to use it as a guide for issues relating to the child at the Arab level;

2. *To call* on member States to participate actively in the work of the special session on children of the United Nations General Assembly to be held in September 2001, and to submit the Arab Framework on the Rights of the Child to the United Nations as an official document;

3. *To call* for the convening of a high-level Arab conference in order to put in place the requisite mechanisms and plans for making the work of Arab States more effective in this area;

4. *To appeal* to Arab States to give every consideration to supporting Palestinian children, who are exposed every day to Israeli acts of overt aggression, and to respect their rights to education and to a life in safety, and also to call for international recognition of the Palestinian struggle.

Arab Framework on the Rights of the Child

Signed by the Council of the League of Arab States, meeting at summit level

Introduction

There has been a crystallization of international concern regarding the subject of children over the last two decades of the twentieth century, reflected in the convening in 1990 of the World Summit for Children, which adopted the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children.

Ten years after that event, the United Nations General Assembly decided to convene a special session on children in September 2001, in order to:

- Review and appraise the progress achieved in implementation of the goals of the World Declaration and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration;
- Develop perspectives for future action and formulate frameworks of commitment to implement them.

Given the importance of regional initiatives in determining priorities and shedding light on issues meriting attention, the Technical Consultative Committee on Arab Children — a committee of the League of Arab States — took steps to supplement other regional preparations and to draw up Arab documents to be issued on this important occasion. They included a draft document containing the Arab Framework on the Rights of the Child, to serve as a guide for work related to childhood issues during the first decade of the twenty-first century. It was prepared in the light of the objectives of the World Declaration and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as new international objectives, and reflected the realities of the Arab region and the goals and strategies adopted by the specialized Arab ministerial councils functioning under the auspices of the League of Arab States.

The draft document was the result of collaboration between the General Secretariat of the League and a number of experts selected from among representatives of the States members of the specialized ministerial councils and also from certain Arab organizations and United Nations specialized agencies.

Following consideration of the draft by the Technical Consultative Committee on Arab Children at its sixth session, held in June 1999, the Committee expressed its intention to submit the document to the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level for its approval. This confirmed the endorsement by Arab States of the world concern over the rights of the child and reflected the positive trend at the highest levels of Arab decision-making and a commitment to issues relating to Arab children, who represent the future human resources of the Arab nation.

Upon consideration of the draft by the Council of the League of Arab States, meeting at summit level on 27 and 28 March 2001 in Amman, capital of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the leaders of the Arab States issued the following resolution:

Arab Framework on the Rights of the Child

The Council of the League of Arab States,

Meeting at summit level,

Having considered the Arab Framework on the Rights of the Child,

Decides:

1. *To endorse* the Arab Framework on the Rights of the Child and to use it as a guide for issues relating to the child at the Arab level;

2. *To call* on member States to participate actively in the work of the special session on children of the United Nations General Assembly to be held in September 2001, and to submit the Arab Framework on the Rights of the Child to the United Nations as an official document;

3. *To call* for the convening of a high-level Arab conference in order to create the requisite machinery and plans for making the work of Arab States more effective in this area;

4. *To appeal* to Arab States to give every consideration to supporting Palestinian children, who are exposed every day to Israeli acts of overt aggression, and to respect their rights to education and to a life in safety, and also to call for international recognition of the Palestinian struggle.

(Resolution No. 216 — 28 March 2001)

Preamble

The Arab States,

- *Committed* to the Charter of the League of Arab States and to the principles, purposes and policies contained in national instruments and strategies,

- *Aware* of the extent of the national and domestic responsibility towards children, who represent half of the Arab population and the future of the Arab nation,

- *Emphasizing* that a commitment to serve the best interests of children is of the utmost priority and is considered a strategic choice for the development of the nation that is firmly linked with Arab national security,

- *On the basis* of Arab participation in international efforts in behalf of children, which culminated in the adoption in 1989 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the ratification of that instrument by the Arab States, the adoption by the World Summit for Children in 1990 of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, and Arab efforts made in the light of these international instruments,

- *Striving* to promote progress in the implementation of the Charter on the Rights of the Arab Child, of 1983, the Pan Arab Plan for Child Survival, Protection and Development of 1992, and the Arab Declaration on the Rights of the Family of 1994,

- *Complementing* the clearly discernible improvements in the situation of Arab children over the last two decades of the twentieth century, and especially the reduction in child mortality, more widespread immunization, lower malnutrition, improved enrolment in basic education, and the trend towards equality between the two sexes in these fields,

- *Recognizing* that these achievements are not yet sufficient for the exercise of the rights of the child and the solution of their problems, especially in the light of accelerating world changes and their repercussions on the situation of children, requiring further development of traditional working procedures,

- *Believing* that this situation demands the adoption of an Arab position that would lay the foundation for a commitment to uphold the rights of the child and would confirm the determination to continue efforts to render these rights more effective and to overcome obstacles and meet challenges.

Major challenges

Realizes that, in order to proceed in a practical and objective manner, serious efforts must be made to determine the accumulated and potential difficulties and challenges involved, at the forefront of which are the following:

1. Economic transformations, including restructuring programmes in some Arab States, participation in international trade agreements and reduced spending in the social sector, difficulties arising from acute poverty and its widespread prevalence, increased rates of unemployment, the omission of a demographic

dimension from some development policies, and increasingly acute social disparities, a harbinger of division and alienation;

2. The pressures faced by families in efforts to promote the upbringing and education of the rising generation resulting from economic, social and cultural changes and the tremendous impact of globalization, with its adverse effects on the system of values, concepts, attitudes and the feeling of belonging, and on family and communal ties;

3. The suffering of large numbers of children — especially infants — and nursing mothers from lack of primary health care, basic health services and malnutrition or unbalanced diets, lack of clean drinking water and proper sanitation, especially in rural and desert areas, poor districts and refugee camps, increased hazards of environmental pollution, dangers of the spread of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and lack of care provided to children with special needs;

4. The phenomenon of primary-school dropout because of economic circumstances, inappropriate teaching methods or certain negative traditional practices, especially in connection with the girl child, or the combined effects of these factors, resulting in a critical rise in illiteracy;

5. The pressing need to revise and develop educational curricula, to give increased attention to the "scientific culture" and the "cultural identity" of the child, and to discover gifted children and develop their talents;

6. The rapid development of science and knowledge and the revolution in information and communications, which have occasioned important changes in the technique and skills required for the labour market in favour of technical and professional groups that are in the vanguard of information and communications technology, and other highly competent groups capable of producing new designs and inventions;

7. The increasing gravity of the problems involving child labour and street children, the dangers of drug addiction, the rising phenomena of violence against and among children, and their physical, mental and social exploitation and maltreatment, whether in the family, the school or the local community, and the combined effect of these problems on juveniles in the form of delinquency and a trend towards behaviour that is hostile to society;

8. The adverse effects of discrimination of varying types on the situation of Arab children and on the opportunities for their upbringing, development and vocational training that would enable them to assume the roles expected of them in the family and society;

9. The lack of conventions under which workers who emigrate to a country to take up work, may be accompanied by their families and the lack of organizations to assist in the settlement of these families and to give their children access to education at all levels and to social welfare and health care, and also the resulting problem of the children of migrants who risk losing their own culture, their mother tongue and their Arab identity;

10. The risks entailed by discoveries relating to the mapping of the genome and genetic engineering and their anticipated negative effects on equal opportunity

among children in many regions of the world, including Arab children, leading to discrimination in respect to their physical and mental abilities;

11. The effect of international sanctions and embargoes on some Arab States, causing extreme suffering among children and women, and the dangers of war and armed conflicts, landmines, threats of the use of nuclear weapons, and radiation leakage from Israeli reactors, exposing the people to lethal dangers;

12. The suffering of Palestinian children caused by Israeli acts of aggression aimed at killing and maiming children, coupled with the lack of facilities to shelter them, Israel's abandonment of all values and human rights and its flouting of all international instruments, and its refusal to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories and to establish a just peace in accordance with the legitimate decisions of the international community, causing heightened suffering among the Arab population under occupation and denying their children all the rights enshrined in the precepts of God and humanitarian law.

Basic resources, means and prospects

In spite of all these problems, the Arab nation is conscious of the fact that it has the necessary basic resources, means and prospects, particularly:

1. Natural resources, a strategic position at the heart of the planet and promising human resources. As children represent more than half the population of Arab countries, the development prospects are very encouraging, given that educating children today is the best investment one can make for the morrow;

2. Religious and social values in which the family and the child occupy pride of place; and a history, civilization and cultural heritage which are deeply entrenched in time and the Arab identity;

3. The interest shown by Arab Governments in human development, human rights and human dignity based on equality, justice and liberty; and their commitment to establishing democratic rules and principles which favour respect for the rights of the child;

4. The importance Arab Governments accord to the advancement of science and knowledge in the world and to the development of their own human and technical capacities in the fields of information and communications;

5. Ratification by Arab Governments of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is illustrative of the political will on the part of these Governments to implement the provisions of the Convention;

6. The importance given by Arab Governments to developing and implementing national plans relating to children, in accordance with the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Pan Arab Plan for Child Survival, Protection and Development;

7. The will of Arab Governments to establish and implement widespread national child-vaccination programmes, to reduce mortality rates for children under five, to raise the awareness of health and environment questions in societies and to advance education both quantitatively and qualitatively;

8. The interest displayed by Arab Governments in improving legislation relating to the rights of the child with a view to guaranteeing respect for those rights;

9. The increasingly active participation by civil-society institutions in debates concerning childhood and maternity and in activities aimed at promoting these matters;

10. Participation by Arab countries in the establishment of new international priorities relating to children at the dawn of the twenty-first century; active participation in the Global Movement for Children, which advocates the mobilization of efforts by the United Nations, its specialized agencies and donor institutions and countries; and the coordination of activities undertaken in this sector with these organizations and institutions in order to derive benefit from their experience and from their support for efforts agreed by the Arab countries to ensure the welfare of children.

Objectives

I. General objectives

1. To establish the concept of the rights of the child up to the age of 18 without distinction as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, social or economic situation, place of birth or any other criterion;

2. To mobilize the resources the Arab countries possess and to encourage the taking of initiatives by Governments, civil-society institutions, individuals and regional and international organizations so that children may enjoy the rights which they are recognized as possessing by the revealed religions as well as by Arab and international conventions and agreements;

3. To adopt development policies which take account of the social and demographic aspects of structural reforms, and to take urgent measures to combat poverty and unemployment and to meet the essential needs of the most deprived groups, particularly children;

4. To offer Arab families a decent life and to enable them to guarantee their members better protection and welfare with a view to strengthening security and social cohesion, and to give the necessary attention to mothers, who care for children even before they are born;

5. To reinforce the role of women, who represent half the living strength of the Arab countries, and to protect their rights; to guarantee them equality of opportunity whether in access to work or in the possibility of leading a decent life; to give them the means to play their role in the development process as well as in the life of the family and the children; and to protect them against the violence and discrimination which deprive them of their rights from childhood, particularly in the health, education and vocational-training sectors;

6. To draw up and support plans, programmes and projects to improve the situation of children at the national level; to give them priority in the allocation of financial resources and in the assignment of technical staff; to consider them as being integral to development plans and sustainable human-development efforts; and to establish criteria for measuring the progress achieved;

7. To enable children to benefit from the rights bestowed on them by the revealed religions, Arab moral, social and cultural values, and Arab and international conventions and agreements;

8. To create the necessary mechanisms and improve those that already exist (national councils or agencies for children, etc.), and to emphasize their responsibilities whether in planning and follow-up of activities undertaken in the various areas to do with the rights of the child or in coordinating the efforts of governmental and non-governmental institutions;

9. To review legislation relating to children; to draw up a special law concerning children based on the *Comprehensive Standard Legislative Manual on the Rights of the Arab Child*, published by the League of Arab States and adopted by the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice; and to take the measures required to have that law implemented;

10. To draw up national plans which help to achieve these objectives in the context of an Arab plan that can be implemented during the first decade of the twenty-first century; to establish a timetable which enables each State to implement this plan within the limits of its means; and to apply unified criteria in evaluating the progress made by each State.

II. Objectives linked to respect for the rights of the child

Taking account of the modern concept of the rights of the child, according to which children's development encompasses respect for their rights from pregnancy to the age of 18, it is important to work for the achievement of the following objectives:

Right to life

11. From the earliest years, the children must be able to enjoy their right to physical, psychological, spiritual and emotional development as well as their right to education. To this end, the following measures should be taken:

- All children must be registered at birth so that they can exercise their civil rights;
- Child-vaccination programmes must be continued, especially for newborn children;
- Efforts must be pursued to lower the mortality rate among newborn children, the under-fives and mothers, and to encourage breastfeeding;
- Greater attention must be given to early childhood, which is the basis for a child's development, and projects and programmes must be launched to ensure a happy childhood and risk-free maternity;
- The health status of mothers and children must be improved and general sickness insurance established;
- Mothers, families, the caregiving agencies and children must be made aware of health matters, and quality services must be provided in the area of reproductive health;

- Healthy and balanced nutrition must be promoted, and people's attention must be drawn to the question of nutrition;
- The population must be provided with drinking water, appropriate sanitary facilities and healthy living conditions, and must be made aware of environmental matters.

Right to growth

12. Children must be able to realize their right to development and education within their natural family and to basic teaching. They should be able to complete their studies and to undertake specific courses of concerted study having moral and social value enabling them to improve their creative abilities and acquire the skills required for everyday life. To achieve this, action must be taken to:

- Develop policies in favour of universal primary education and the elimination of illiteracy, particularly among children;
- Extend the range of free, compulsory basic education, if possible to secondary level with the provision of equal opportunities for girls;
- Improve the quality of all aspects of the education system, especially the curriculum, from kindergarten to the end of secondary level;
- Develop programmes to discover gifted children and develop their creative abilities;
- Attend to children's physical development and provide access to exercise and fresh air throughout the course of their development;
- Develop educational and occupational-training programmes taking account of innovations and labour-market requirements;
- Improve teacher-training methods and the material, psychological and spiritual welfare of teachers;
- Maintain, renovate and develop educational buildings to make them suitable for a variety of activities;
- Devote more attention to children's knowledge of their scientific culture and cultural identity;
- Encourage Arab institutions of learning to make a larger contribution to children's education and intellectual training by giving them the resources to counter the effects of satellite broadcasting and resist the dissemination of values and orientations which run counter to Arab values.

Right to participation

13. Adolescents up to the age of puberty must be enabled to develop their creative abilities, express their positive inclinations and participate effectively in the forward march of society. To achieve this, action must be taken to:

- Pay greater attention to adolescent needs, provide young people with advisory services on health and training and educate them on ways of protecting themselves against danger and disease;

- Inform children of their rights and enable them to participate in activities provided for their benefit, to express their opinions and to play a full role within the family, the school and society, in informational and cultural institutions and in children's associations and organizations;

- Allocate an adequate proportion of all informational resources to information geared to children, in which they themselves may participate, and to families and others occupied with the care of children.

Right to protection

14. Children must be enabled to realize their right to protection against violence, abuse, suffering and negligence, against exposure to danger, perversion, drug abuse and armed conflict and against economic exploitation. To achieve this, action must be taken to:

- Raise awareness of the need to protect children against all forms of violence, harm, negligence or killing in schools or their local surroundings, prevent harmful traditional practices, especially for girls, and put in place mechanisms of protection and assistance for children in need of such help;

- Put an end to the worst forms of child labour and ensure that all Arab States accede to the relevant international conventions and take steps to implement them;

- Introduce short-term plans to prevent more children from entering the workplace and long-term plans to eliminate child labour altogether in Arab countries;

- Improve conditions for working children and homeless children, adopt the necessary social and legislative measures to ensure their protection, halt the deterioration in their living conditions and health and provide all the necessary support for programmes of prevention, treatment, education and training to prevent exclusion and ensure their integration into society;

- Tackle the harsh conditions faced by child offenders, orphans and refugees by children in difficult situations as a result of occupation, blockade, famine, natural disasters or armed conflicts, by those living in abnormal conditions as a result of family break-up and by those with special needs or physical, mental or social disabilities and provide them with the means of prevention, treatment and training.

Civil rights

15. Children's civil rights and citizenship rights must be guaranteed. To achieve this, action must be taken to:

- Reassert the acknowledgement of children's individual rights and the associated right to a name, an identity, a lineage and a nationality and to freedom, protection and well-being;

- Inform children and society about these rights and work for their implementation by updating legislation concerning children; and, where possible, issue laws expressly relating to children and take the necessary steps to implement such laws.